Panel to Vote On Closing ITT Hearing

3/30/72

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Republicans on the Senate Judiciary Committee forced Chairman James O. Eastland (D-Miss.) yesterday to schedule a vote next Thursday on whether to cut off the hearings on the nomination of Richard G. Kleindienst as Attorney General.

But Democrats on the committee were already discussing the prospect of transferring the controversial hearings to a subcommittee headed by Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), should the Republican move succeed.

The most likely solution to such a deadlock appeared to be a compromise within the Judiciary Committee. Democrats and Republicans could agree to continue the hearings for a set time, taking testimony from a narrowed list of witnesses concerning the Kleindienst nomination and International Telephone and Telegraph Corp.

Sen. Marlow W. Cook (R-Ky.), one of Kleindienst's most vigorous defenders on the committee, said that he would favor such a compromise.

In the meantime, ITT President Harold S. Geneen and general counsel Howard J. Aibel testified again yesterday during the 12th session of the reopened Kleindienst hearings.

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In a series of sharp exchanges with Democrats on the committee, Geneen disputed much of the testimony given by ITT lobbyist Dita D. Beard in a Denver hospital room last Sunday before she collapsed with a heart seizure.

Mrs. Beard is the alleged author of an ITT memorandum published by columnist Jack Anderson, which linked settlement of Justice Department antitrust cases against ITT with a large pledge to the GOP convention.

Geneen insisted he knew nothing of a phone call Mrs. Beard said came from the White House to William R. Merriam, head of ITT's Washington office, last spring, asking whether the corporation had pledged as much as $600,000 to the Republicans, perhaps to go directly into President Nixon's re-election campaign fund.

Perusing two conflicting transcripts (an official committee document, another for the press) of Mrs. Beard's hospital testimony, Geneen said her remarks about the White House phone call were "ridiculous . . . I don't think it makes any sense . . . Both of them (the transcripts) are kind of crazy . . . It's not even grammatical."

The ITT president reiterated his earlier testimony that the only commitment ever made by the corporation's Sheraton Hotel subsidiary was for $200,000 to help bring the Republican National Convention to San Diego.

If President Nixon will not use the new Sheraton being built in San Diego as his convention headquarters, as White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler recently stated, Geneen said, "an agreement would be breeched . . . I would consider the offer to be no longer made."

Geneen also contradicted Mrs. Beard's testimony that she had given Merriam a memorandum on the GOP convention offer which included some, but not all, of the sentences in the one published by Anderson.

But he said he had not checked with Merriam since learning of Mrs. Beard's testimony, because the director of the Washington office is out of town.

Talking to reporters, Geneen denied that he had refused to see Mrs. Beard when she was summoned to ITT headquarters in New York after Anderson published the alleged memorandum.

Mrs. Beard testified Sunday that she was not allowed to see Geneen and that ITT officials in New York insisted she had written the disputed memo.

Eastland appeared angry yesterday that ITT had made public the results of private laboratory tests on the Anderson-published memo before submitting them to the committee.

"I'm going to take what the FBI said about it," the chairman said. The FBI reported last week that the memo probably was written around the time it was dated, June 25, 1971; ITT's experts say it may have been typed as recently as January or February of this hear.

Eastland has revealed that the FBI made the memo available to the ITT experts on his suggestion, but it was unclear whether the ITT tests were done "under control of the FBI" as the chairman required.

In other testimony yesterday, Geneen contradicted an earlier ITT statement that he had discussed antitrust policy with White House aide Peter M. Flanigan and Rep. Bob Wilson (R-Calif.).

His discussions with Flanigan were on "revenue sharing and reorganization of the government" and with Wilson on "modular housing" and a fishing trip," he said.